REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-19 are presently active; Claims 20-49 have been withdrawn by a Restriction Requirement, and Claims 1, 5, 13, 14, and 19 have been presently amended.

In the outstanding Office Action, the specification was objected due to informalities. Claims 1-19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Claims 5, 13, 14, and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Claims 19 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Claims 1-3, 5, and 9-11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Jap. Pat. Appl. Pub. 08-031753 to Tashiro et al. Claims 4, 6-8, and 13-19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tashiro et al in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication 2003/0151372 to Tsuchiya et al. Claim 12 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tsuchiya et al in view of U.S. Pat. No. 5,441,596 to Nulty.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the courtesy of Examiner Arancibia to briefly discuss this case on March 20, 2005 with regard to the interpretation of Tashiro et al that the Office was taking in making the 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) rejection. In summary, Examiner Arancibia views Tashiro et al as teaching a two-step plasma ignition process which starts a plasma at 13.56 MHz and then impresses a VHF frequency on the plasma.

In light of this reading of Tashiro et al, the present response defines in Claim 1 that the plasma is ignited by applying to a first electrode in the processing chamber a first RF signal at a first RF frequency to ignite the plasma and thereafter providing to the first electrode a second

RF signal at a second RF frequency.[1] Applicants submit that such a plasma ignition process is not disclosed or suggested by Tashiro et al.

For instance, paragraph [0027] of Tashiro et al states in the machine English translation that "after it impresses first low frequencies, such as at least 13.56 MHz RF, and this starts discharge for discharge starting, a VHF frequency is impressed and it made discharge by VHF" [emphasis added]. Yet, Tashiro et al disclose in paragraphs [0020] to [0025] the use of first and second electrodes for the application of "RF RF" and "VHF RF" frequencies, respectively. More specifically, Tashiro et al disclose in paragraph [0022] that "said VHF RF is supplied to this second electrode," and Tashiro et al disclose in paragraph [0023] that "said RF RF is supplied to this first electrode holding a substrate."

This approach of Tashiro et al using separate electrodes for different applied RF signals differs from Claim 1 in which the first RF signal and the second RF signal are applied to the same electrode (i.e., the first electrode).

Hence, it is respectfully submitted that Claim 1 and the claims dependent therefrom patentably define over Tashiro et al.

Regarding the objection to the drawings and the outstanding 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, rejection to Claims 1-19, a Letter Submitting a Replacement Drawing Sheet is submitted herewith in which new Figure 3 reflects the present claim language. Further, the specification has been amended to reflect which parts of the original specification are identified with the steps in Figure 3. Thus, the objection to the drawings and the outstanding 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, rejection to Claims 1-19 are believed to have been overcome.

Regarding the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, to Claims 5, 13, 14, 17 , and 19, the issues identified with Claims 5, 13, 14, 17 , and 19 have been addressed by the

[1] Support for this clarification is seen in the presently amended paragraphs of the specification, such amendments reflecting changes to the steps depicted in presently submitted Figure 3 and not representing any changes to the substantive matter. Hence, no new matter has been added.

present amendments to these claims. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, rejection to these claims has been overcome.

Finally, it is respectfully requested that this amendment be entered under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 which permits the entry of amendments upon a showing of a good and sufficient reason why the amendment is necessary and was not presented earlier. In the present case, no new art has been made of record from the first Office Action, and the present clarifying amendment is made in light of the recent discussion on March 20, 2006 with Examiner Arancibia in which the examiner's view of a two-step plasma initiation process in Tashiro et al became apparent. Since the examiner's view on Tashiro et al was not of record before these discussions with Examiner Arancibia, amending the claims prior to this time would only have unduly limited Applicants' claim scope at that time and hence would have been unnecessary. Hence, it is respectfully requested that the present amendment be entered under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above discussions, the outstanding grounds for rejection are believed to have been overcome. The application as amended herewith is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments: Letter Submitting Replacement Drawing(s), Replacement Sheet (1)

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Amendments to the Drawings

The attached sheet of drawings includes changes to Fig. 3. This sheet, which includes Fig. 3, replaces the original sheet including Fig. 3.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet.